

The President's Daily Brief

29 May 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *page 1* we discuss Warsaw's positive attitude toward President Nixon's forthcoming visit as Poland looks ahead to its future role in a period of European detente.

Moscow broadcasts to Vietnam urge an end to the war through negotiation, and a Viet Cong representative insists that big power summit meetings will not change the situation. (*Page 2*)

In South Vietnam, the military situation at Kontum City is serious. (*Page 3*)

Next Sunday's election in Cambodia could turn out to be a real contest. (*Page 4*)

In Chile, labor union elections this week are expected to boost Allende's claim of strong working class support. (*Page 5*)

Bonn has asked for an early meeting between West European and US officials on the SALT agreements. (*Page 6*)

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POLAND

As a result of President Nixon's visit to Moscow, Warsaw is looking ahead to a period of detente in Europe backed by the US and the Soviet Union. The Polish Government sees an opportunity to re-establish in some degree many of Poland's traditional ties with Western Europe, but it also worries that the USSR might try to limit such ties. It appears that within the past few days the Poles have decided to seek during President Nixon's stop in Warsaw a closer relationship to the US. This they see partly as a counterweight to anticipated Soviet pressures for close East European coordination on policy toward Western Europe. The Poles, apparently dismayed by the USSR's failure thoroughly to consult with them during the West German treaty ratification crisis, also seem to have concluded that they must seize this opportunity to stake out a policy toward Europe that is less dependent on the Soviet Union but still stays largely within the framework of their alliance with Moscow.

Since last Thursday, Polish officials in Washington--perhaps under instructions--have given US diplomats and USIA officers a glimpse of Polish expectations arising from the President's visit.

- Polish party chief Gierek is said to hope for an understanding with the President that will be broader than improved economic relations;
- Although they will be unable to express it explicitly, the Poles remain interested in a continued US presence in Europe, including the US troops in West Germany; and
- The Polish Government may express a desire for an agreement to hold periodic consultations--similar to Warsaw's arrangement with the French--on matters of mutual interest, particularly European problems.

These positions are clearly designed to achieve for the Poles the kind of leeway they think they will need in establishing new relationships with Western Europe. For some time, the Poles have valued the US presence in Europe as a check on the Germans as well as the Soviets.

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USSR-VIETNAM

Two Radio Moscow broadcasts beamed at Vietnamese listeners on 25 May assert that negotiations are the only way to end the war, and they both endorse the Vietnamese Communist proposal to reconvene the Paris talks. The first notes that the Vietnam problem "cannot be solved by military means." The second defends Moscow's search for better relations with Washington and reminds unnamed "friends" that the USSR's peace program entails no sacrifice of principle because it pays great attention to eliminating "dangerous hotbeds of war" in Southeast Asia and to solving problems there by political means.

This line is in keeping with what the Soviet media have said in the recent past, and it squares with Premier Kosygin's remarks during his toast Friday night. These broadcasts, beamed specifically at the Vietnamese and in their language, are evidently designed to emphasize Moscow's position to Hanoi. Meanwhile, the Soviet media continue to ignore recent North Vietnamese statements denouncing the President and criticizing attempts to internationalize the Vietnam issue.

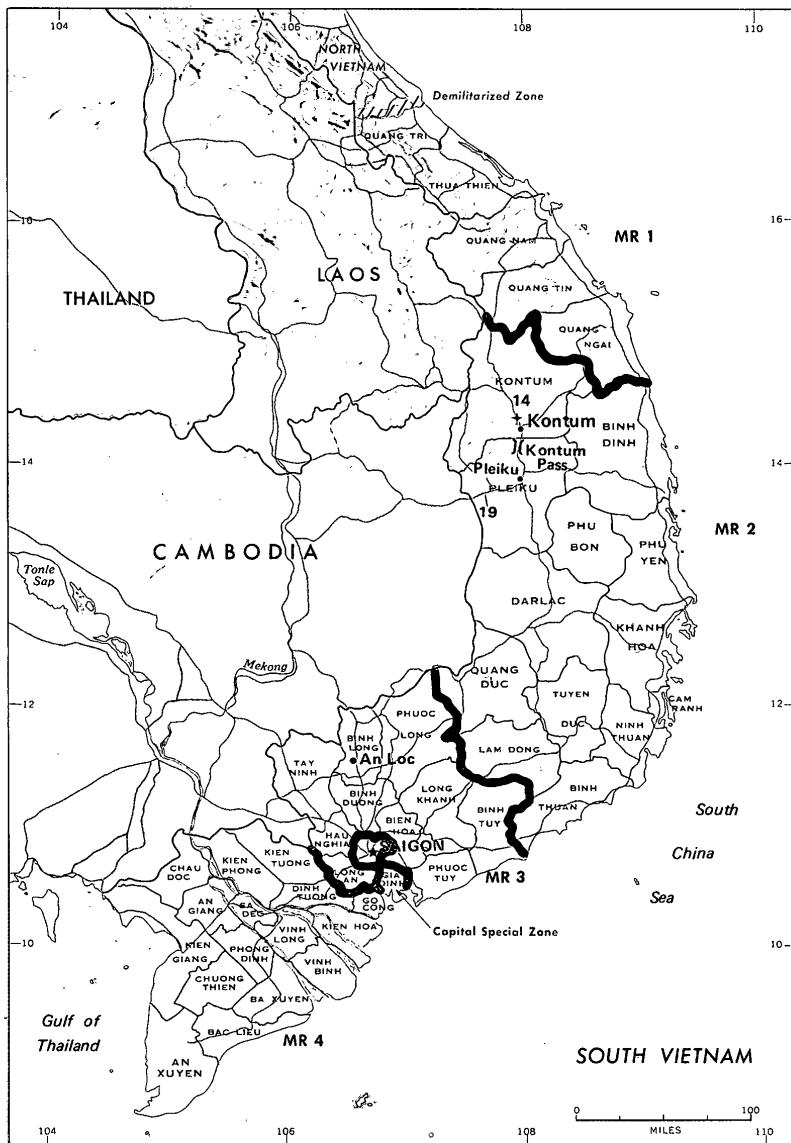
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In an interview with a Japanese correspondent in Paris on Sunday, the Viet Cong's chief negotiator said that none of President Nixon's "big power negotiations" can solve the Vietnam problem. According to the Japanese press report, Madame Binh also ruled out any possible change in Soviet and Chinese policies toward Vietnam, "whatever the aims of President Nixon's visits to Peking and Moscow might be."

If Madame Binh's remarks are accurately reflected in the Japanese press, they represent the most explicit statement this year by any Vietnamese Communist official on the big power summit meetings. North Vietnam's news media have repeatedly warned Hanoi's allies abroad of "deceitful US diplomatic ploys" but so far have made no direct reference to President Nixon's visits to either Moscow or Peking.

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VIETNAM

The situation at Kontum City is serious. The airfield is now in Communist hands and the city's main ammunition dump nearby has been destroyed. Helicopters are still able to bring in some supplies to the defenders. Resupply by land is precluded by Communist forces blocking the road at Kontum Pass. Nevertheless, South Vietnamese counterattacks on 28 May have driven some Communist forces out of the city.

An American observer has reported spotting a large Communist force of some 1,000 men and 26 tanks moving toward Pleiku City, some 30 miles away. There have been several Communist sapper attacks against military installations in the city and this movement suggests that larger attacks may be in the offing.

Fighting in the rest of the country was light and scattered. Only a few actions have been reported in the An Loc area. The South Vietnamese relief force has made no further progress toward the town.

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CAMBODIA

With the voting less than a week away, former deputy prime minister In Tam seems to be posing a real threat to Lon Nol's bid to become the country's first elected president.

[redacted] reports over the past week indicate that significant numbers of voters in the Phnom Penh area favor In Tam, and that he is running ahead of Lon Nol in some of the more populated areas of the countryside. In Tam is making effective use of those issues on which Lon Nol is most vulnerable--military weakness, corruption, and authoritarianism. His candidacy has been especially appealing among Phnom Penh's disgruntled students, many of whom have volunteered to help in his campaign.

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For its part, the regime--with the vigorous backing of the military establishment--is working to boost Lon Nol through such means as a massive army parade on 27 May. [redacted]

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[redacted] The government will be counting the votes and this, of course, gives it the ultimate advantage.

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CHILE

Several hundred thousand labor union members throughout the country will vote on Tuesday and Wednesday for the leadership of their national labor confederation. There are nine competing slates, but the main ones are those of the Communists, the Socialists, and the opposition Christian Democrats.

The government--in which the Communists and the Socialists are both represented--is expected through this election to gain some substance for its claim of strong working class support. However the votes are divided among them, the combined pro-government forces--with two major and several minor party slates--are likely to win over half the votes.

The Christian Democrats, campaigning to pick up protest votes from people disillusioned with the Allende government, could get upwards of 25 percent of the total. Much more than that would embarrass the Allende government. Even more awkward from the government's view would be a strong showing by the slate backed by the ultra-revolutionary and violence-prone Movement of the Revolutionary Left.

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NOTES

West Germany - SALT: Bonn has asked for an early meeting between West European and US officials on the SALT agreements. A Foreign Office official made the request a few hours before the agreements were signed in Moscow. He disclaimed any European intention to "watch over the shoulder of their American friends," but said that US-European consultations would also be desirable before negotiations begin on a second-stage agreement. He noted that Bonn attaches less importance to the details of SALT agreements than to "broad concepts which take into account European interests."

Cuba: Fidel Castro is still wending his way through Eastern Europe prior to his planned arrival in Moscow in mid- to late June. His nine days in Bulgaria, most of it spent sightseeing, were evidently somewhat of a strain on his hosts. Castro, now in Rumania for four days, is expected to move on to Hungary on Tuesday. He then visits East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia before finally arriving in the USSR.

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